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SUBJECT: JAGDEO USES WORLD CUP TV COVERAGE TO BOOST IMAGE

¶1. (U) President Jagdeo has taken credit for bringing World Cup soccer to Guyanese television. The state-run National Communications Network (NCN) has bombarded the airwaves with this news in recent days, heralding the "personal intervention of His Excellency President Bharrat Jagdeo" to make World Cup coverage possible. These announcements overtly suggest that Jagdeo himself forked over the GY\$5 million (US\$25,000) shortfall needed to secure the broadcast rights. Given the president's ever-growing reputation for unrestrained self-promotion, EmbOffs had their doubts and made further inquiries.

¶2. (U) Upon further review, it appears that NCN has completely mischaracterized Jagdeo's contribution. This was no personal act of philanthropy. Rather, the money came from Guyana's lottery fund, not from Jagdeo's pocket -- a key fact that NCN neglected to mention.

¶3. (U) The World Cup broadcast rights for Guyanese television cost US\$70,000. NCN could only muster US\$45,000 from reluctant sponsors. The GoG turned this problem into an opportunity, using government funds to pay the difference and letting Jagdeo take the credit. The move makes political sense, too. Soccer is more popular with Afro-Guyanese, a group that largely supports the opposition PNC/R party. The one wrinkle in the plan is that NCN is showing the World Cup matches late at night on tape delay, which has caused public grumbling among soccer fans.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT. Although this episode may seem innocuous, it underscores the extent to which Jagdeo and the state media have tried to portray his presidency as benevolently overseeing his personal fiefdom. Not so long ago, Jagdeo was still considered by most political observers as a pawn of the ruling PPP/C party's Politburo-like Executive Committee. Now some PPP/C insiders must be fretting over the president they created. END COMMENT.

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